UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1995/13
31 August 1994

ENGLISH
Original: ARABIC

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-first session
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE

Note verbale dated 17 May 1994 from the Permanent Mission of the League of Arab States to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Centre for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the League of Arab States to the United Nations Office at Geneva presents its compliments to the Centre for Human Rights and has the honour to transmit herewith the monthly report on Israeli practices in the Palestinian and occupied Arab territories for March 1994.

The Permanent Mission of the League of Arab States wishes to express its deep concern at the aggravation of the situation of Arab civilians in the territories occupied by Israel, as described in the attached report. It requests the Centre for Human Rights to consider this report as an official document and to circulate it to the members of the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-first session.

Report on Israeli settlement and human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories in the month of March 1994

Immediately after the Israeli massacre at the Ibrahimi Shrine in the occupied town of Hebron, the Israeli occupation forces imposed a long-term military cordon around most areas of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. The economic situation and livelihood of the Palestinians have consequently deteriorated and the Palestinian economy, which relies largely on revenues from Arab workers employed inside Israel, has been severely damaged.

A Palestinian economist and member of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks estimate that, in the two weeks since the cordon was imposed, the Palestinian economy has suffered losses of about US$ 126 million, and that the occupied territories are losing a daily 0.003 per cent of their annual national income of US$ 2,500 million, or US$ 8 million daily.

Agricultural crops and some animals have perished as a result of the blockade, which has also caused further losses in that Arab workers, whose numbers are estimated at more than 24,000, have been prevented from travelling to their places of employment in Israel.

On the last Friday of the month of Ramadan, the Israeli authorities tightened security measures, preventing large numbers of Palestinians from going to the occupied city of Jerusalem to pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. They also imposed entry restrictions on Palestinians aged below 40 and heavily policed the entrance to the city and the area around the doors of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, deploying over 2,000 men.

These latest bars on entry to places of worship in the city of Jerusalem violate the freedom of worship and the freedom to perform religious rites at holy sites.

With regard to the massacre at the Ibrahimi Shrine at Hebron, after the conclusions of the investigating committees had been published, the Israeli human rights group, Betzelem, accused the Israeli army and police of failing to provide protection for Palestinians against repeated attacks by settlers.

Witnesses at the mosque testified that more than one settler had opened fire on the worshippers. They had seen several troops firing on worshippers both inside and outside the Ibrahimi Shrine; this confirms that members of the Israeli army were in collusion with the Jewish settlers and facilitated their crime against the Arabs.

At the end of March, Israeli army troops carried out a wide-scale military operation in the town of Hebron, during which they raided several houses where young Palestinians were hiding. They completely destroyed four houses and killed four young Palestinians, as well as two women in neighbouring districts who were downed by stray bullets. Hundreds of anti-armour missiles were used in that operation, in addition to explosive charges and various submachine weapons.

The League of Israeli and Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights also protested against the raid by a number of Israeli troops on the Ahli Hospital in the town of Gaza.

According to the letter sent by the League to the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, the troops raided the hospital in search of a wounded Palestinian and, on learning that he was in the operating theatre, entered it without the slightest regard for medical and health regulations. When the operation was over, they took away the injured patient on the pretext of transferring him to a hospital in Ashqelon, despite doctors' warnings that his condition was worsening.

It should be mentioned that a group of soldiers had already raided the hospital earlier in March and conducted a search of all departments, in particular the emergency department.

The Israeli authorities are also continuing their daily encroachments on Arab land and their acts of aggression against the Arab population. From the beginning of Israeli occupation to the end of March 1994, the authorities have confiscated a total of 3,139,975 dunums of land in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. They have also proceeded with their attempts to promote settlement and have prepared plans to encourage Jewish immigrants to settle in the 186 settlements in the West Bank and the 20 settlements in the Gaza Strip.

With regard to violations of the fundamental freedoms and rights of the population, the Israeli authorities continued to implement their inhuman policies and imposed individual and collective punishments, as illustrated by the sentences passed on 47 residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip who appeared before the military courts. The sentences ranged from imprisonment for a few months to several years, with heavy fines.

They also issued 18 administrative detention orders for periods ranging from 5 to 6 months, demolished 5 houses, killed 36 Palestinians and injured hundreds of other Palestinians.

The following details of Israeli violations were reported in the Arabic press in the city of Jerusalem during the month of March:

I. Confiscation of land and settlement

(a) Confiscation of land

The Land Research Centre of the Arab Studies Society in Jerusalem pointed out that the recorded number of land confiscations had increased; during the intifada, an average of about 4,700 dunums of land was confiscated monthly, decreasing after the Madrid Conference to 2,500 dunums. After the signature of the Declaration of Principles, however, the monthly average escalated to an unprecedented 8,400 dunums.

Before the Madrid Conference, an average of 233 dunums per month came under direct settlement, whereas after the signature of the Declaration of Principles, the pattern rose to a monthly average of 1,081 dunums, which, as the Centre pointed out, conflicts with Israeli promises to cease or freeze

settlement. The authorities have now seized, confiscated and closed off over 70 per cent of the area of the West Bank. (Al-Quds, 30/3/1994)

The confiscations and settlement activities carried out by Israeli settlers beyond the boundaries of their settlements with a view to expanding those settlements and constructing settlement roads are illustrated by the following:

The Israeli Ministry of Housing invited tenders for the construction of 470 housing units in the settlement of "Beitar". These new units are to be erected on land which the authorities intend to confiscate in the districts of Ramallah and Bethlehem. (Al-Quds, 19/3/1994)

Settlers from the settlement of "Migdalim" seized extensive areas of land, estimated at about 1,000 dunums, from the village of Qasra, claiming that it belonged to the Government. Israeli bulldozers proceeded to level the land, which was planted with olive trees, to make way for the construction of settlement facilities. (Al-Quds, 21/3/1994)

Settlers from "Maaleh Livona" seized a plot of land owned by a Palestinian at the village of Sinjal/Ramallah and fenced it off with barbed wire. (Al-Quds, 23/3/1994)

The Israeli authorities seized an unmarked area of land owned by inhabitants of the village of Shufa/Tulkarm with a view to expanding the settlement of "Avnei Khefetz". (Al-Quds, 25/3/1994)

Settlers from "Alei", west of the village of Qaryut/Nablus, expanded the boundaries of their settlement at the expense of village land. (Al-Quds, 25/3/1994)

(b) Settlement roads

Mekorot, the Israeli water company, constructed a road and a water pipeline on land owned by a Palestinian at the village of Beit Iksa/Jerusalem. (Al-Quds, 25/3/1994)

Settlers from the settlement of "Shavei Shomron", north of Nablus, proceeded to construct a settlement road, 1.5 km in length and 6 m in width, across land belonging to the village of Deir Sharaf. During the process, bulldozers uprooted hundreds of olive trees. This is now the third road constructed across village land to serve the population of that settlement. (Al-Quds, 27/3/1994)

II. Attacks on Arab citizens and their property

(a) Encroachments on land

The Arab Studies Society in Jerusalem pointed out that the recorded number of operations to confiscate land and uproot fruit-bearing trees had risen noticeably.

The Society's report covered operations to confiscate land and uproot trees, pointing out that some 10,700 fruit-bearing trees, 85 per cent of them olive trees, were uprooted during the past six months, bringing the total number of fruit-bearing trees uprooted from land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the beginning of the intifada to about 250,000.

Examples of operations to uproot trees during March are illustrated by the following:

The uprooting of 800 olive trees at the village of Jalud/Nablus. (Al-Quds, 20/3/1994)

The uprooting of 400 grapevines at the village of Khadr/Jerusalem. (Al-Quds, 22/3/1994)

The uprooting of 28 olive trees at the village of Abud/Ramallah. (Al-Quds, 29/3/1994)

(b) Attacks on Arab citizens

Members of the Israeli army raided the house of a journalist at Dheisheh camp, conducted a minute search and confiscated the cameras that were in the house. (Al-Quds, 2/3/1994)

Four settlers from "Allon Morei" smashed the windows of scores of vehicles in the streets of Nablus. (Al-Quds, 5/3/1994)

Settlers attacked the fire station in Hebron and wrecked its equipment. (Al-Quds, 7/3/1994)

An Israeli army force raided the village of Nahhalin/Bethlehem. The troops conducted a wide search, during which they fired a profusion of gas shells. (Al-Quds, 9/3/1994)

Occupation forces confiscated 30 head of cattle belonging to inhabitants of the village of Silat al-Harithiya. (Al-Quds, 11/3/1994)

Israeli army troops raided the Hamza mosque in the town of Ramallah, arrested worshippers and subjected them to questioning. (Al-Quds, 11/3/1994)

The Israeli authorities closed the mosque at Batin/Ramallah for a period of six months. (Al-Quds, 17/3/1994)

The Israeli authorities closed the mosque in the village of Dhahiriya/Ramallah for a period of three months. (Al-Nahar, 18/3/1994)

Settlers wrecked four Arab vehicles in the town of Jenin. (Al-Quds, 20/3/1994)

Settlers raided the village of Mughaiyir/Ramallah, severely beat up the inhabitants and wrecked their property. (Al-Quds, 23/3/1994)

III. Practices in violation of human rights in the occupied territories

1. Arrests

(a) Mass arrests

Occupation forces launched a wide campaign of arrests among Palestinians in the course of which hundreds of young men were detained. These mass arrests in the occupied territories are illustrated by the following:

Four Palestinians arrested at Khan Yunis/Gaza. (Al-Quds, 2/3/1994)

Twenty persons arrested in the city of Jerusalem. (Al-Quds, 6/3/1994)

Eleven young men from the district of Shofat/Jerusalem arrested. (Al-Quds, 9/3/1994)

Seventeen persons from the city of Jerusalem arrested. (Al-Quds, 10/3/1994)

Three persons arrested at Deir al-Balah. (Al-Quds, 11/3/1994)

Fifteen persons arrested at Jabaliya camp. (Al-Quds, 17/3/1994)

One hundred and seventy-seven Arab workers from the occupied territories arrested on the pretext that they were in Israel without entry permits. (Al-Quds, 18/3/1994)

Twenty-five persons arrested in the town of Hebron. (Al-Quds, 25/3/1994)

Five young Arab men arrested in the city of Jerusalem. (Al-Quds, 26/3/1994)

(b) Administrative detention

The campaign of administrative detentions launched by the Israeli authorities against Palestinians escalated. During the month, they placed 18 citizens in administrative detention for periods ranging from 5 to 6 months (reported in editions of the Al-Quds newspaper from 2 March to 1 April 1994).

(c) Sentences passed on Arab citizens

In March 1994, Israeli military courts passed harsh sentences of imprisonment, including life imprisonment, on residents of the occupied territories.

During the month, 47 Palestinians appeared before Israeli military courts in the occupied territories (as reported in editions of the Al-Quds newspaper from 2 March to 1 April 1994).

Three were sentenced to life imprisonment and heavy fines averaging 700 shekels were imposed on suspects. The total of these fines was estimated at about 34,250 Israeli shekels, i.e. about US$ 12,230.

(d) Conditions of detention and ill-treatment of detainees

Al-Dhamir (Conscience), the organization for the welfare of detainees, reports that the Israeli Department of Prisons has decided to designate the prisons at Nafha and Ein al-Sab' for Palestinian detainees sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. The authorities attempted to transfer several prisoners condemned to life imprisonment to these two prisons, and moved detainees from Jerusalem with sentences exceeding five years to Shatta and Kafar Yuna prisons.

Al-Dhamir (Conscience) voiced its fear that the Israeli authorities were determined to maintain the policy of classifying detainees according to their political associations and requested that this policy should cease. It also believed that maintenance of the security cordon around the occupied territories constituted a collective punishment of Palestinians and denied their right to freedom of movement and consequently their freedom to visit relatives detained in Israeli prisons. It protested against the fact that Palestinian lawyers are prevented from visiting detention camps and prisons inside the Green Line, which is a violation of the most basic rights of lawyers and detainees.

At Jenin Central Prison, detainees announced a boycott of treatment by and visits to the prison doctor until further notice, in protest at deteriorating sanitary conditions, the negligence of the administration and the conduct of the prison doctor. In an urgent letter to the Red Crescent Society, they appealed for support in bringing pressure to bear on the authorities to provide treatment for detainees who are ill.

The detainees confirmed that they had to endure poor sanitary conditions, which they described as tragic: 45 detainees are suffering from various illnesses that require care and immediate treatment. (Al-Quds, 12/3/1994)

The Juneid prison administration took additional punitive measures against Sami Fawaghara from the village of Khadr, who is sentenced to life imprisonment: he was forbidden to receive visits for a period of 80 days. He is suffering dangerous complications, having received a head injury which caused the paralysis of his hand and leg. (Al-Quds, 22/3/1994)

2. Restrictions on freedom of movement and travel

The curfew on the towns of the West Bank, particularly Hebron, was maintained all month, constituting a collective punishment, as were the military roadblocks, which increased the wide-scale suffering of the population and brought various economic sectors to a complete standstill because workers were unable to reach their places of employment inside Israel. Market activity slumped in the towns of the Gaza Strip and most of the agricultural produce marketed in the Gaza Strip or made ready for export perished, causing huge losses to farmers.

3. Demolition of houses

In March 1994, the Israeli occupation authorities mounted a massive raid, lasting over 36 hours, on houses in Hebron. During the raid, hundreds of troops armed with a variety of weapons and backed up by helicopters laid seige to a number of houses in a district of the town and destroyed more than five houses with anti-armour missiles and explosive charges.

4. Martyrs

The number of Palestinian martyrs killed by gunfire in the occupied territories amounted to 36, mostly in the town of Hebron, while the other largest number of martyrs fell in the Gaza Strip. Four women were also killed: two of them were killed in Hebron by random gunfire from troops in the process of raiding houses of Hebron, and the other two were killed in the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli human rights organization, Betzelem, also accused the Israeli army of perpetrating a summary execution at Jabalia camp when two undercover troop units fired from all directions, without warning and without there being any danger to the lives of Israeli troops, on a group of young Palestinian men distributing leaflets. This operation seems to have been well planned, since the undercover units finished off all the young men. When one of the injured tried to escape, he was followed by a soldier who shot him in the head at extremely close range. A woman and another Palestinian were also injured in the heavy firing.

This brings the number of male and female martyrs killed from the beginning of the intifada to the end of March 1994 to 1,672. The following list gives the names of the persons killed in March 1994.

No.	Name	Age	Place of residence	Source of report
1.	Osama Mustafa al-Misri	17	Hebron	Al-Quds, 3/3/1994
2.	Othman Ali Barham	18	Jericho	Al-Quds, 3/3/1994
3.	Ayman Youssuf al-Qurashi	11	Gaza	Al-Quds, 3/3/1994
4.	Imtiaz Ahmad Murtaji	17	Gaza	Al-Quds, 5/3/1994
5.	Nasser Nimr al-Tayrawi	24	Balata camp	Al-Quds, 5/3/1994
6.	Hatim Nimr As'ad al-Ka'bi	27	Balata camp	Al-Quds, 5/3/1994
7.	Wa'il Na'im al-Natsha	27	Hebron	Al-Quds, 8/3/1994
8.	Samir Eid Dweik	20	Hebron	Al-Quds, 8/3/1994
9.	Ayyad Ahmad Salah	-	Gaza	Al-Quds, 8/3/1994
10.	Ibrahim Khalil Salama	23	Khan Yunis	Al-Quds, 9/3/1994
11.	Islam Fawzi Abu Armileh	27	Al-Eizariya/ Jerusalem	Al-Quds, 10/3/1994
12.	Musa Badr Dawwas	18	Deir al-Balah	Al-Quds, 11/3/1994
13.	Abdullah Ahmad Muhaysan	22	Jabalia	Al-Quds, 16/3/1994
14.	Anwar Zaki Farhaneh	23	Tulkarm camp	Al-Quds, 16/3/1994
15.	Nadhal Muhammad Isa al-Tayrawi	38	Balata camp	Al-Quds, 17/3/1994
16.	Amjad Zayn al-Din al-Awaywi	22	Hebron	Al-Quds, 17/3/1994
17.	Muhammad Mustafa Shahwan	22	Khan Yunis	Al-Quds, 18/3/1994
18.	Taha Muhammad Abu Sameh	36	Bani Suhaila	Al-Quds, 18/3/1994
19.	Abdul Rahim Muhammad Hammash	44	Dheisheh camp	Al-Quds, 19/3/1994

20.	Ahmad Aleiweh	28	Gaza	Al-Quds, 22/3/1994
21.	Handaq Muhammad Yunis	35	Hebron	Al-Quds, 23/3/1994
22.	Manal Sa'id Qanini	21	Hebron	Al-Quds, 23/3/1994
23.	Ala' Mansour Dhib Dawwas	-	Tubas	Al-Quds, 24/3/1994
24.	Ayyad Muhammad Abu Hadid	22	Hebron	Al-Quds, 25/3/1994
25.	Muhammad Ayyid al-A'rash	22	Hebron	Al-Quds, 25/3/1994
26.	Marwan Abu Ramileh	27	Hebron	Al-Quds, 25/3/1994
27.	Riyadh Saleh Islimiya	35	Adhna/Hebron	Al-Quds, 26/3/1994
28.	Anwar Muhammad al-Maqusi	25	Jabalia camp	Al-Quds, 29/3/1994
29.	Ahmad Salim Abu Abtayhan	23	Jabalia camp	Al-Quds, 29/3/1994
30.	Jamal Salim Abdul Bani	35	Jabalia camp	Al-Quds, 29/3/1994
31.	Nahidh Muhammad Awdeh	24	Gaza	Al-Quds, 29/3/1994
32.	Majdi Youssuf Obeid	25	Gaza	Al-Quds, 29/3/1994
33.	Abdul Hakim Shamaleh	30	Gaza	Al-Quds, 29/3/1994
34.	Omar Awadh al-Qabbani	17	Bureih camp	Al-Quds, 30/3/1994
35.	Wa'il Khalil Dhib Nufal	18	Deir Sharaf	Al-Quds, 31/3/1994

Violations against educational institutions

Since imposition of the most recent security cordon, Israeli forces have prevented students from the Gaza Strip from attending their universities in the West Bank.

Schools in the Gaza Strip have been closed since the end of February until further notice on the pretext of preventing confrontations with the Israeli army.

The following is a list of schools in the occupied territories which are closed:

Khadr Boys' Secondary School and Khadr Girls' Secondary School, until further notice;

Bethlehem Boys' Secondary School, until further notice;

Bethlehem Boys' Primary School, until further notice;

Iskandar al-Khouri School/Bait Jala;

Bethlehem Girls' Secondary School.

The Israeli authorities laid heavy seige to Bethlehem University, setting up military roadblocks at the university gates, while troops showered the university precincts with gas shells and hails of bullets.

Studies at Al-Azhar University/Gaza were also suspended for one week.